

# Stuff in the Road

A Trip to Greece with Adriatic Mototours

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This was one of the best trips I've ever taken, and it was made so by the professionals at Adriatic Mototours and the camaraderie of the two couples that joined my wife and me on the ride.

As tends to be the case on motorcycle tours, we all became friends and riding companions within a few short miles in the saddles of our nice new BMWs – it's one of the many benefits of the motorcycle world. The Adriatic guides, Matej Malovrh and Primož Cerara, made this possible by providing a wonderful tour, well coordinated, full of great riding, superb accommodations and food, and spectacular sights.



*Our crew prepares to head out*

The tour started from Glyfada, a beach town outside of Athens (trailerding our BMWs into and riding them out of Athens is a no-win proposition), but Athens is a must see, so my wife and I arrived 3 days early and took in the sights of the city. The old section of Athens (Plaka) holds so much history and charm it would be a shame to get so close and miss the wonders of the Acropolis, Hadrian's library, the Olympic stadium, the Agora, Roman and Ottoman monuments, great food, and so on.





*The Acropolis (above) and Hadrian's library (below) in the center of Athens.*





As for our tour, we all met at the Oasis Hotel in Glyfada, had a good night's rest and headed out on our first leg to the island of Evia. Evia is the second largest island in Greece after Crete and offers a wonderful taste of the islands of Greece.

We passed through beautiful villages, coastal resorts and quiet towns. We got our first view of the crystal clear water of the Aegean Sea. Our day three ride took us to Meteora. We navigated wonderful mountain roads and got our first introduction to the great twisting roads of the Greek countryside.

Meteora is the location of many of the largest and most important Eastern Orthodox monasteries in Greece. This is a region of almost inaccessible sandstone peaks and monasteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> century. From Meteora, it was on to Karpenisi, a mountain town with an alpine village feel. Here, we took a rest day to enjoy the mountain air, beautiful views, and great roads to ride.



*One of six remaining monasteries.*

After a good rest, we were off to Delphi, one of the most historic stops on our route. We were cautioned to watch for donkeys, rocks, double-parked car/trucks, goats, and/or sheep herds in the road. It wasn't the first nor would it be the last time we'd be told about "stuff in the road." The highways and byways make Greece a bike riding paradise but, as can be seen by the

endless supply of roadside monuments, it can be a precarious riding adventure. The monuments to roadway deaths resemble small church like houses in which family members can place candles.



*One of many “death boxes” that dot the countryside.*

Delphi met all expectations. It's a large area filled with the ruins of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC site of the Oracle of Delphi. The site includes an interesting museum, the Temple of Apollo, a wonderfully preserved athletic stadium, and a large Sphinx of the Naxians dating back to 560 BC.





*The remains of the temple of Apollo at Delphi.*



*Thermopylae, a monument to the 300 Spartans.*

On route to Delphi, a short side trip took us to Thermopylae. This is where the famous Greek and Persian battle took place in 480 BC and 300 Spartans made history.

Our crew had another great dinner and got a good night's rest, this time in the town of Olympia. The next day, we headed out to see the archeological site and museum at Olympia – what a great place!

The first Olympic Games were held here in 776 BC and continued at this site until 394 AD. Olympia holds the Temple of Zeus, the Temple of Hera, and several other very interesting structures, as well as the intact field where the games were held. The museum is equally interesting and holds wonderful examples and explanations of all that once stood at Olympia.

On our way to the Mani peninsula, we encountered some of the most exciting mountain riding on the tour, 195 miles of roads that make the Tail of the Dragon in Tennessee seem like a cake walk. We saw many more death boxes, a constant reminder to be on your game. As our ride neared Limini Village, we visited the Temple of Vassos and passed near the legendary town of Sparta.

As we approached our day ten destination, we could see a large rock connected to the mainland. It is topped by a fortress and as you cross the causeway leading to this large rock, a medieval stone town comes into view. The town is a 13<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine commercial center which has been restored and now has many shops, restaurants, and hotels. It's a great place to tour, eat, and spend a day.

On our next to last day of riding, we headed to Nafplion, a delightful, mid-size city dating back to the second Venetian occupation. It is a modern destination for Athenians and has great shopping, dining, and tourist sites.

Sadly, our last day came far too quickly but, as we headed back to Athens (Glyfada), we had time to stop at one more ancient Greek site, the temple of Epidauros, and then to the Corinth Canal. They are both worth taking the time to see. The Temple of Epidauros is dedicated to the god Asclepius and still has the best preserved ancient theater. The Corinth Canal connects the Gulf of Corinth to the Aegean Sea. The canal was built between 1881 and 1893 and was our last stop before we made our way back into the Athens area and our last night in Greece.

In closing, I can only say that it was a great trip with great guides and wonderful riding companions. When you combine the beauty of the country, the spectacular roads, and the extraordinary history, you can't do better than a trip to Greece.

I also have to say that most of the words and references you have just read come from a very complete and helpful tour guide pamphlet provided by Adriatic Mototours, whom I can't thank enough for a great trip. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND THEM. So, if you are planning a trip to Greece, check them out at <http://www.smtours.com/Motorcycle>.